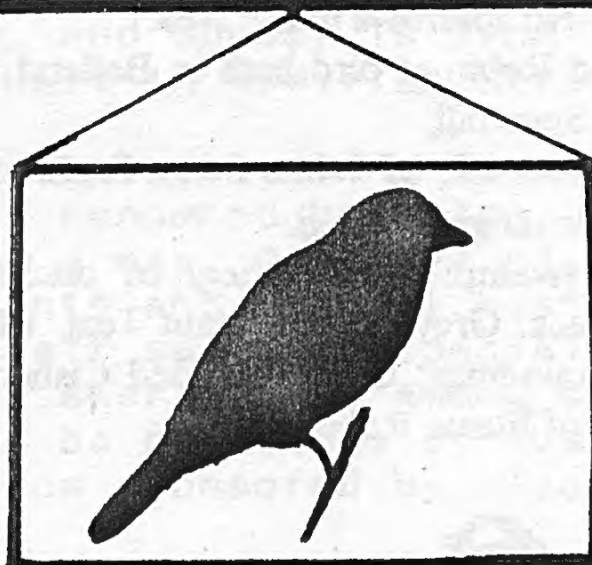


*Field Naturalists
Club of Ballarat*
Incorporated

AUGUST 1993

EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Meeting August 6 | Members Special Interests Night |
| Meeting September 3 | Box and Ironbark Forests - Fauna and Conservation - Barry Traill. |
| Excursion August 8 | Local Fungi - Florence Chuk and Shirley Faull. (Half day) |
| Excursion September 5 | Inverleigh Common - Grant Baverstock and Laurie Conole. |



President : Dr. K. McDonnell Ph:053 326800
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Treasurer: Mrs. P. Williamson 327631
Editor: Mr. A. Dyson 413948

Meetings as specified are held at the School of Mines and Industries, Lydiard Street Sth, Art Building, commencing at 7.30 p.m. EXCURSIONS, AS SPECIFIED, COMMENCE FROM BOOK CITY, cnr STURT AND ARMSTRONG STS, BALLARAT at 9.30 a.m. for FULL DAY OUTINGS OR at 1.30 p.m. for HALF DAY.



Field Reports: July Meeting

Lyndsay Fink: First sighting of Cattle Egret at Meredith. Flocks of finches (50 Red-browed Finches and 30 Goldfinches) feeding on cleared land around the edge of Brisbane Ranges National Park.

Ken McDonnell: Flocks of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos seen around Creswick forest and at south end of Wiltshire Lane.

Ken Hammond: Flock of 60 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos at Black Hill. Grey Butcherbird feeding on meat scraps in Wendouree garden wedged a piece in a Callistemon.

Harvey Hooper: Ibis, Cockatoos and Long-billed Corellas becoming more common at Brown Hill. No sparrows in the area.

Helen Burgess: Female Hooded Robin at bird bath in Ballarat North was chased away by Eastern Spinebill.

Greg Binns: Observed on the west side of White Swan Reservoir: White Ibis, Black Duck and wide range of fungi.

John Gregurke: At Flaxmill swamp: wide variety of ducks - Black, Chestnut-breasted Shelduck, Grey and Chestnut Teal, Blue-winged Shoveller. In grass surroundings: Golden-headed Cisticola, Black-fronted Chat and 2 pairs of Flame Robins.



Diary Dates

September 18-19 Angair Wildflower Show

August 8 and 22 Community planting at Pryor Park.

August 26 (7.30pm) Committee Meeting at McDonnells' in Dawes Road, Invermay.

EXCURSION - Sunday 8 August - this is a half day excursion - meet at Book City, 1.30pm.

REQUEST FOR SYLLABUS ITEMS

The FNCB Committee is seeking ideas for syllabus items for the 1994/95 programme. We want to see members involved in selecting and arranging the club's activities. If you have any suggestions for syllabus items, ie. if you know of anyone who would be prepared to present a talk or conduct an excursion, please contact the Secretary or other member of the committee.

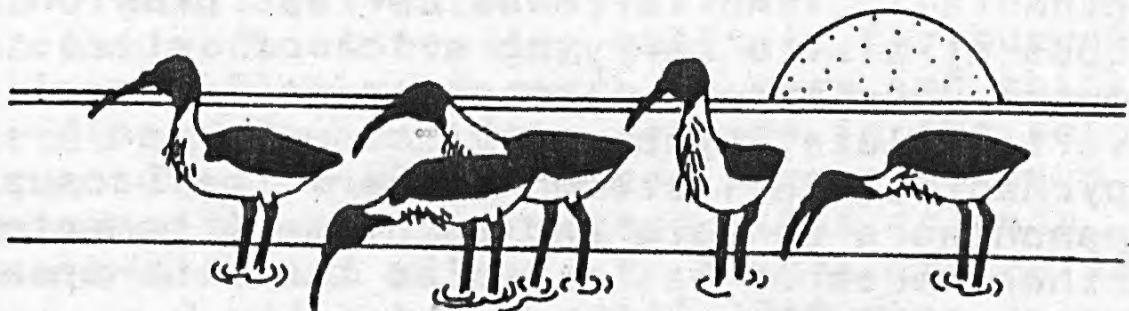
ANGAIR WILDFLOWER SHOW 18 - 19 SEPTEMBER 1993 AT ANGLESEA.

Angair (Anglesea and Aireys Inlet Society for the Protection of Flora and Fauna) will hold its anual Wildflower Show on Saturday 18 September from 10am to 5.30pm, and Sunday 19 from 10am to 5pm. at the Anglesea Hall in McMillan Street.

There will be excursions to selected locations in Anglesea's renowned heathland and woodland wildflower areas. Displays of wildflowers, local native plants and natural history books for sale, art and craft sales, a special stage display and a children's section are among other attractions. There will be paintings by Australian artists in the art show sponsored by Alcoa.

Admission is \$4 for adults, \$2 for pensioners and students. Children 12 and under are free.

Further information - Fred Wright (052-631843) and Evelyn Jones (052-896046).



VARIETY OF COLOUR IN WILD CORREAS

Roger Thomas

Until last month I had always wondered whether the correa bushes (Rock Correa - *Correa glabra*) at Mt Beckworth were natural there, or descended from specimens replanted in the 1960's - although the number of old, well-established plants certainly didn't suport the idea of 1960's planting. (I think it was after the 1967-68 drought that Dr Jim Willis and Mrs Stella Bedggood planted a few correas (in this case *C. reflexa*, not *C. glabra*) at the top of Mt Beckworth. *C. reflexa* once occurred there but had apparently become extinct).

A late June visit to a patch of bush on the banks of the Yarrowee River below Mt Mercer has helped to solve this little mystery. There we found numerous bushes of Rock Correa - the same species as at Mt Beckworth - some with yellow flowers, others yellow-green, and others red with yellow-green tips.

The discovery of these Yarrowee plants has convinced me that *Correa glabra* does indeed naturally show a great variety of flower colour, even in small isolated populations, hence the many colours evident at Mt Beckworth. I am now sure that the Beckworth plants are indeed indigenous.

Perhaps some FNCB members may be aware of this already (if so, my apologies for writing about my "great discovery"), but it was certainly of great interest to me.

Incidentally, the Yarrowee correas grow on rocky slopes at a site carrying a lot of interesting remnant vegetation: *Allocasuarina littoralis*, *A. verticillata*, *Myoporum viscosum*, *Acacia implexa*, *A. pycnantha*, *Callistemon sieberi* (paludosus), *Hymenanthera dentata* and *Enchylaena tomentosa*. Further research has revealed that the area is a DCNR Bushland Reserve.

I hope to discover more about the native plants of the Yarrowee, from its source at Gong Gong Reservoir down to about Mt Mercer, and would be grateful to hear from anyone with any information.

An interesting discovery so far is a population of the beautifully scented, exotic looking *Gynatrix pulchella* or Hemp-bush. Although not rare, this shrub is not well known. It seems to always occur on sheltered streambanks, and is a favourite of mine because of its beautifully perfumed spring flowers.

LORDS OF ANTACTICA (continued)

The volcanic Kerguelen Island was two days cruising away. Kerguelen is the largest land mass in the Southern Indian Ocean. There are about 300 smaller islands, islets and rocks which make up the Kerguelen Archipelago. It is about 2000Km from Antarctica and 1800Km WSW of Australia.

Kerguelen is roughly triangular and is 120Km x 140Km with a deeply dissected shoreline of 1350Km, no point is more than 20Km from the coast. There are a few ice-capped peaks of 1000m with the highest 1850m. Steep cliffs rise to 600m in areas.

The numerous islands provide rabbit-free areas for vegetation and rat and cat free sanctuaries for breeding birds.

There are 28 flowering plants, 4 ferns, 2 club mosses with a few introduced grasses and other weeds. The main species are the same as for Crozet Is. I only saw the Kerguelen cabbage on Crozet Is.

The rabbits were released in 1874 by the British Transit of Venus Expedition. The resulting erosion has reduced nesting habitats for burrowing petrels. The black rat preys on eggs and chicks of petrels and the cat is a scourge in the petrel colonies. Dogs, mink and sheep have also been introduced with varying success. The islands were discovered and claimed by France in the 18thC. They remained uninhabited until 1909 when a whaling station was established. (cont. p.7)

PHOTOGRAPHING NATURE

Recent talk by Alan Henderson

Alan has a B.Applied Science (Photography) from R.M.I.T. He showed us many excellent slides during his talk. Some of the points he emphasised were :

A 90mm macrolense is normally used for nature photography. A flash with reduced aperture will give a good depth of field - the flash is so fast a tripod is not necessary (if using a tripod ensure it has a flexible arm). Use the flash with 64 ASA film to avoid a "grainy" aspect (particularly with colour slides).

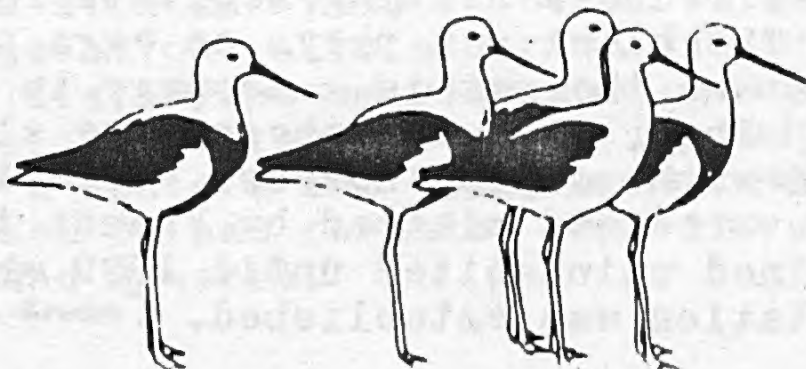
A large light source reduces shadows and using a flash through a (home made) "soft box" will diffuse the light efficiently.

Sets and backgrounds are important and can be made up easily and inexpensively. Alan showed us examples of realistic polystyrene nests and burrows. A black velvet draped background can also be very effective. Foliage, pebbles and rocks, twigs and flowers from the garden can always be utilised.

For scientific photos use a plain background with a visible length scale.

It is important to know the habits of animals while photographing - Alan makes a point of feeding spiders to keep them relatively inactive.

Many questions from the audience indicated the popularity of Alan's subject.



Apart from the birds mentioned that were on Crozet Is. we saw thousands of Macaroni Penguins. The macaroni are a group of 6 crested penguins. Crested penguins lay 2 eggs, the first being smaller than the second, from 20-50% smaller. Rarely do 2 chicks survive.

Macaronis weigh up to 4Kg and are about 70cm tall. Their crests are vivid orange. These birds are amongst the most colonial of all penguins and perhaps of all birds. Breeding Macaronis form a single solid mass, sometimes on rough terrain and they climb steep rocky slopes. Both sexes incubate the eggs 32-35 days. the chicks fledge at about two months. The adults then go to sea and return a month later to moult and with thousands of penguins moulting at the same time they drop millions of feathers which resemble the result of a huge pillow fight.

From the coastal cliffs we could look down on hundreds of moulting elephant seals resting in groups on the shingle beach. Pups are sometimes crushed to death by bulls defending their territory. Elephant seals are the largest seal species in the world. Males grow to 6m long and can weigh 3,600Kg (4 tons). Females are 3.6m long and 900Kg. The males have an inflatable proboscis. They were slaughtered for their oil, the pelts were useless. They are very boyant so find it difficult to stay submerged.

We also saw Gentoo Penguins and chicks. The chicks were still fluffy and did not have the distinguishing white feathers on the head. Gentoos are docile and timid. The rookeries are on level or gently sloping ground and the birds do not always return to the same rookery.

There were young Giant Petrels. The adult birds are about the size of the Light-mantled Sooty Albatross. They make a nest of pebbles lined with feathers or other available material. They lay a single egg. Incubation is 6-8 weeks. They are scavengers and predators and are known as stinkers as they regurgitate the result of feeding on dead birds and seals. The chicks regurgitate this aromatic and oily secretion if they are agitated. I was lucky to avoid such an experience as I inadvertently went too close - the chick was on a nest sheltered by a rock.

Greater Glider (Petaroides volans)

These are the largest of the gliders and have an almost exclusive diet of eucalyptus leaves and, like the koala have a greatly enlarged caecum to help break down the leaves and to assimilate substances by bacterial fermentation.

Greater gliders live in a variety of eucalyptus habitats from low open forests to tall forests and low woodlands west of the Divide. In it's range they will eat only two types of eucalypts. In the day they sleep in hollow trees and limbs. They are agile climbers with a pincer like grip, having the first two toes of the forefeet opposing the other three. Since the leading edge of the palagium is only to the elbow (not the wrist as in other gliders), they do not extend the whole limb when gliding but flex at the elbow bringing the paws under the chin.

A glide may cover a horizontal distance of up to 100 metres and change direction by as much as 90 degrees before reaching the target. The glide is directed upwards and it loses speed and lands with all four feet on the trunk. Trees can be identified by the scratches on the bark. The glider moves clumsily on the ground with a loping motion and falls prey to foxes, dingoes and the Powerful Owls.

They breed from March. The female has two teats but one young is born - this emerges at 3 to 4 months and for the next 3 months may be carried on the mothers back. They become independent at 9 months but not sexually active for another year.

Gliders are territorial and rely on scent from well developed glands. They are silent animals - abundant in undisturbed forest with old trees with hollows. Scarcer in regenerated forests and not found in rainforests. They are found in the Wombat State Forest where they are abundant (this is the nearest area to Ballarat).

There are 2 subspecies.

Elfin